

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 7135

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EGEN, VE

SUBJECT: UNDER SECRETARY ROBINSON'S VISIT - BILATERALISM

1. SUMMARY: FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT UNDER SECRETARY ROBINSON'S VISIT WAS A CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN MOVING US ALONG TOWARD A STRENGTHENED BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH VENEZUELA. HE MET AND TALKED WITH VIRTUALLY ALL THE KEY FIGURES IN THE GOV'S ECONOMIC TEAM, REINFORCING THE SENSE OF PERSONAL CONTACT AT THE UPPER LEVELS THAT IS SO IMPORTANT TO THE RELATIONSHIP. THE FACT THAT HE WAS HERE FOR SERIOUS DISCUSSIONS OF SERIOUS ISSUES WAS NOT LOST ON THE VENEZUELAN. THE VISIT OPENED UP SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES FOR COOPERATION IN SPECIFIC AREAS. IT ALSO BROUGHT FORTH, IN OUR JUDGEMENT, THE DESIREBILITY OF MOVING STEP-BY-STEP TOWARD STRENGTHENED BILATERALISM. THROUGH TANGIBLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS, RATHER THAN ATTEMPTING TOO SOON TO STRUCTURE THE RELATIONSHIP BY MEANS OF FORMAL ARRANGEMENTS WHICH HAVE LITTLE APPEAL HERE AT THE MOMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE UNDER SECRETARY DEVOTED A CONSIDERABLE PORTION OF HIS TWO DAYS HERE TO THE CONVERSATIONS WITH MINISTER MANUEL PEREZ GUERRERO THAT HAVE BEEN REPORTED SEPARATELY. HE ALSO CALLED ON OR OTHERWISE MET WITH MINISTERS HURTADO (FINANCE), GUMERSINDO RODRIGUEZ (PLANNING) VALENTIN HERNANDEZ (MINES AND HYDROCARBONS) CONTRERAS (AGRICULTURE) AND JOHN RAFAEL (ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER). OTHER CONTACTS INCLUDED REINALDO FIGUEREDO AND HIS COLLEAGUES AT THE INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN COMMERCE, THE HEADS OF THE VENEZUELAN DEVELOPMENT, PETROLEUM AND SHIPBUILDING CORPORATIONS (MARCEL

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CURIEL, GENERAL CARLOS CARNEVALLE AND ADMIRAL JOSE SEIJAS),

THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL BANK (CARLOS RAFAEL SILVA), ONE OF THE THREE DIRECTORS OF THE VENEZUELAN INVESTMENT FUND (JOHN PHELPS, JR.), KEY AD LEADERS (LUIS PINERUA, DAVID MORALES BELLO AND ARTURO HERNANDEZ GRISANTI), AND A GROUP OF PROMINENT AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN.

3. THIS HEAVY SCHEDULE GAVE MR. ROBINSON THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONVEY TO AN INFLUENTIAL AUDIENCE OUR DESIRE FOR CLOSER AND MORE EFFECTIVE BILATERAL RELATIONS AND OUR DISPOSITION TO COOPERATE IN THE VENEZUELAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AS THE VENEZUELAN THEMSELVES MIGHT DESIRE. HIS BEING HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE WAS THE BEST EVIDENCE OF USG INTENTIONS. THE FACT THAT THE UNDER SECRETARY'S PRIMARY MISSION WAS SERIOUS CONSULTATIONS ON FUNDAMENTAL INTERNATIONAL ISSUES WAS NOT LOST ON VENEZUELAN LEADERS MORE ACCUSTOMED TO WASHINGTON VISITORS ON PROTOCOLARY OR GOOD WILL ASSIGNMENTS.

4. SEVERAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTENSIFIED COOPERATION EMERGED FROM THE UNDER SECRETARY'S CONTACTS. THE DISCUSSION AT THE INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN COMMERCE LED TO AN AGREEMENT THAT WE WOULD PURSUE MORE DETAILED CONSULTATIONS HERE ON THE QUESTION IN ADVANCE OF THE 7TH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNGA AND THE FORTHCOMING EXERCISE IN THE OAS. MINISTER CONTRERAS ACCEPTED WITH ALACRITY THE UNDER SECRETARY'S OFFER OF A SURVEY VISIT BY TWO AGRICULTURAL EXPERTS TO LOOK AT SPECIFIC POSSIBILITIES IN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. GUMERSINDO RODRIGUEZ SAID CORDIPLAN'S SPECIALISTS IN "TECHNICAL COOPERATION" WOULD BE FULLY PREPARED TO RECEIVE A VISIT FROM JOHN HEILMAN OF AID TO REVIEW POSSIBILITIES FOR REIMBURSABLE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. RODRIGUEZ ALSO INDICATED AN INTEREST IN DISCUSSING AT A LATER DATE COLLABORATION IN RESEARCH ON THE APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY TO THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN VENEZUELA (WHICH LIKE THE MAYOR OF NEW YORK HE FINDS A VERY COSTLY BUSINESS), AS WELL PERHAPS AS OTHER PROSPECTS ARISING FROM THE NEW FIVE YEAR PLAN.

5. NONE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY'S INTERLOCUTORS EXPRESSED ANY DOUBTS ABOUT THE DESIRABILITY OF CLOSER BILATERAL RELATIONS; BUT NONE SEEMED TO BE THINKING OF A MORE STRUCTURED OR MORE FORMAL APPROACH TO THOSE RELATIONS. JOHN RAFAEL DID ADDRESS HIMSELF TO THAT QUESTION IN THE WAKE OF A REFERENCE TO THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FOREIGN MINISTER'S IDEA OF A JOINT WORKING GROUP. (HIS WAS THE ONLY RESPONSE OF ANY KIND TO SEVERAL OTHER SUCH REFERENCES FROM OUR SIDE. HE NOTED FROM CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE THAT VENEZUELA'S VARIOUS BILATERAL MIXED COMMISSIONS (WITH SPAIN MEXICO AND YUGOSLAVIA AMONG OTHERS) DO NOT WORK WELL. IN HIS OPINION THEY HAVE TENDED TO DEGENERATE INTO PAPER EXERCISES WITH LITTLE SUBSTANCE. RAFAEL HAD ALSO FOUND THAT HIGH-LEVEL GOV PARTICIPANTS APPROACHED THE MEETINGS OF THESE COMMISSIONS WARILY,

AS IF GOING INTO AN ADVERSARY RELATIONSHIP. IT WAS HIS OPINION THAT REAL BUSINESS CAN BETTER BE TRANSACTED BY DIRECT, INFORMAL CONTACT BETWEEN SENIOR OFFICIALS-- IN OUR CASE IN CARACAS OR WASHINGTON.

6. COMMENT: RAFAEL, WHO PROBABLY HAS TO OVERSEE THE PAPERWORK FOR THE COMMISSIONS, MAY NOT BE AN ENTIRELY UNBIASED COMMENTATOR. BUT WE THINK HE HAS A POINT, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE GOV IS EXTREMELY THIN IN THE UPPER LEVELS. SENIOR OFFICIALS ARE WORKING BEYOND THEIR CAPACITY AND IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OR ANYONE ELSE CAN PREVAIL ON THEM TO SCHEDULE OR PROPERLY PREPARE FOR THESE BILATERAL EXERCISES.

7. MR. ROBINSON'S VISIT, IN OUR JUDGEMENT, DID HIGHLIGHT THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUILDING A STRONGER BILATERALISM STEP-BY-STEP THROUGH SPECIFIC BUT AD HOC PROJECTS. HE OPENED SEVERAL NEW DOORS AND WE THINK SEVERAL NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISIBLE COOPERATION CAN BE EXPLOITED. IN THIS FASHION WE CAN DEMONSTRATE OUR INTEREST AND CREATE CONFIDENCE, THUS MOVING GRADUALLY TOWARD A MORE INTENSIFIED SET OF RELATIONS THROUGH THIS PERIOD OF PETROLEUM NATIONALIZATION.  
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